

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line including a planar member having a top edge, a bottom edge and opposing side edges, a ~~drilled~~ hole disposed intermediate said opposing side edges for receiving the rope or line, a slot adjacent to said ~~drilled~~ hole disposed intermediate said opposing side edges and intermediate said bottom edge and said top edge for receiving a looped portion of said rope or line, a pair of diametrically opposed slots extending from each of said opposing side edges for receiving each portion of said looped portion, and a series of slots alternately disposed on said opposing side edges and being spaced from each other and extending toward said bottom edge, said series of slots for receiving said rope or line whereby the rope or line is wound around said planar member and sequentially inserted into alternate of said series of slots to helically wind said rope around a portion of said planar member.

2. (Original) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 1 including a vertical center line, each of said diametrically opposing slots are angled relative to said center line extending from the opposing side edge and fairing toward said top edge.

3. (Original) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 2 wherein each of said series of slots extend from said opposing side edges and are angularly disposed where alternate slots of said series of slots are alternately angled relative to said center line so that each of said series of slots alternately fair from said opposing side edges toward said bottom edge and toward said top edge and each of said series of slots extend to said center line.

4. A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 3 wherein said series of slots include side surfaces and said side surfaces are flat.

5. (currently amended) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 4 wherein said top edge, said bottom edge, said opposing side edges, said ~~[[drilled]]~~ hole and said slot are formed with a radius on the front face and back face.

6. (Original) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 4 including a recess formed on said front face and said back face, a flat plate complementing the dimensions of said recess for fitting therein and being adaptable to having logo indicia thereon.

7. (Original) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 1 wherein said top edge is contoured and said bottom edge is contoured.

8. (currently amended) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line having a planar front face, a planar back face, a top edge, a bottom edge and opposing side edges, a drilled hole disposed intermediate said opposing side edges for receiving the rope or line, a slot extending through said front face and said back face and being adjacent to said ~~drilled~~ hole and disposed intermediate said opposing side edges and intermediate said top edge and said bottom edge for receiving a looped portion of said rope or line, said top edge, said bottom edge, said opposing side edges, said ~~drilled~~ hole and said slot are formed with a radius on the back face and front face, a pair of diametrically opposed slots extending from each of said opposing side edges and fairing toward said top edge for receiving each portion of said looped portion, and a series of slots alternately disposed on said opposing side edges and being spaced from each other and

alternately extending toward said top edge and said bottom edge, said series of slots for receiving said rope or line whereby the rope or line is wound around said planar member and sequentially inserted into alternate of said series of slots to helically wind said rope around a portion of said planar member and each of said series of slots having inside surfaces whereby said inside surfaces of said series of slots being flat.

9. (Original) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 8 wherein said top edge is contoured and said bottom edge is contoured.

10. (Original) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 8 including a recess formed on said front face and said back face, a flat plate complementing the dimensions of said recess for fitting therein and being adaptable to having logo indicia thereon.

11. (New) A coupling apparatus for ropes or lines including a planar member having a top edge, a bottom edge and opposing side edges, a hole disposed intermediate said opposing side edges for receiving a first rope or line, a slot adjacent to said hole disposed intermediate said opposing side edges and intermediate said bottom edge and said top edge for receiving a looped portion of a second rope or line and intermediate said hole and said top edge, a pair of diametrically opposed slots extending from each of said opposing side edges adjacent said top edge for receiving each portion of said looped portion, and a series of slots alternately disposed on said opposing side edges and being spaced from each other and extending toward said bottom edge, said series of slots for receiving said first rope or line whereby said first rope or line is wound around said planar member and sequentially inserted into alternate of said series of slots to helically wind said first rope around a portion of said planar member from said slots extending

from adjacent to said hole to adjacent said bottom edge wherein said first rope is coupled to said second rope.

12. (New) A coupling apparatus for ropes or lines as claimed in claim 11 including a vertical center line, each of said diametrically opposing slots are angled relative to said center line extending from the opposing side edge and fairing toward said top edge.

13. (New) A coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 12 wherein each of said series of slots extend from said opposing side edges and are angularly disposed where alternate slots of said series of slots are alternately angled relative to said center line so that each of said series of slots alternately fair from said opposing side edges toward said bottom edge and toward said top edge and each of said series of slots extend to said center line.

14. (New) A coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 13 wherein said series of slots include side surfaces and said side surfaces are flat.

15. (New) A coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 14 wherein said top edge, said bottom edge, said opposing side edges, said hole and said slot are formed with a radius on the front face and back face.

16. (New) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 14 including a recess formed on said front face and said back face, a flat plate complementing the dimensions of said recess for fitting therein and being adaptable to having logo indicia thereon.

17. (New) A tensioning and coupling apparatus for a rope or line as claimed in claim 11 wherein said top edge is contoured and said bottom edge is contoured.